

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 2284

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJECT: DEMIREL'S PROSPECTS

REF ANKARA 2246

1. PRIMIN-DESIGNATE DEMIREL'S PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT ARE AS YET UNCERTAIN. HE HIMSELF, IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT FOLLOWING HIS DESIGNATION BY THE PRESIDENT MARCH 19, NOTED THAT "AT THE MOMENT, THE KNOWN NO-CONFIDENCE VOTES ARE NOT MORE THAN THE VOTES OF CONFIDENCE". WE UNDERSTAND THAT HE AND HIS CENTER-RIGH NATIONALIST FRONT ARE COUNTING ON A LARGE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS AMONG DISSIDENT MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP) TO MAKE POSSIBLE SUCCESS IN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE.

2. SINCE THE NATIONALIST FRONT, CONTROLLING ONLY 218 SEATS IN
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THE 447-MEMBER LOWER HOUSE, FACES A POTENTIAL NEGATIVE

VOTE OF 229, IT MUST COUNT ON 12 ABSTENTIONS AND INVOLUNTARY ABSENCES, OR SIX NEW ADHERENTS, OR A COMBINATION OF THE TWO. THE NATIONALIST FRONT'S HOPES PROBABLY WERE FED BY A STATEMENT ISSUED MARCH 19 BY DP DISSIDENT MUTLU MENDERES (SON OF THE LATE PRIMIN) OBJECTING TO THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT FOR A DP PLUS TECHNOCRATS GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED BY THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP). A COUNTER-BALANCING FACTOR IS THAT THE DP LEADERSHIP, APPARENTLY SUPPORTED BY MANY OF ITS MEMBERS, RECENTLY INDICATED ITS INTEREST IN FORMING JUST SUCH A GOVERNMENT. (HOWEVER, OUR LATES INFORMATION IS THAT THIS INTEREST MAY BE COOLING.)

3. MEANWHILE, MEETINGS OF THE NATIONALIST FRONT PARTIES (JUSTICE, NATIONAL SALVATION, REPUBLICAN RELIANCE, AND NATIONAL ACTION) ARE BEING HELD IN AN EFFORT TO DEVELOP A COALITION PROTOCOL, WHICH IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD FORMING A CALAITION GOVERNMENT. A DIFFICULT AND POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE PERIOD OF INTRA-COALITION BARGAINING HAS THUS BEGUN. LATER, ASSUMING (A) THAT DEMIREL STILL FEELS CONFIDENT OF SUCCESS IN THE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, (B) THAT AGREEMENT ON A PROTOCOL HAS BEEN REACHED, AND (C) THAT THE PARTIES HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO AGREE ON THE MAKEUP OF THE CABINET, DEMIREL WOULD SUBMIT HIS LIST OF PROPOSED CABINET MEMBERS TO THE PRESIDENT FOR APPROVAL. GIVEN THE PRESIDENT'S APPROVAL, THE PROPOSED CABINET WOULD AT THAT POINT TAKE OFFICE AND, UNDER THE CONSTITUTION, WOULD HAVE ONE WEEK IN WHICH TO SUBMIT ITS PROGRAM TO PARLIAMENT FOR A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. IF IT FAILS TO ACHIEVE A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE, THE DEMIREL CABINET WOULD REMAIN IN POWER AS A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT.

4. FOR SOME THREE MONTHS PREVIOUSLY THE NATIONALIST FRONT HAD BEEN CALLING ON THE PRESIDENT FOR A BID TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, AND HAD BEEN REBUFFED BECAUSE IT DID NOT HAVE AN ASSURED PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. THE PRESIDENT AND SENIOR MILITARY COMMANDERS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE STRONG RESERVATIONS CONCERNING A DEMIRAL-LED CENTER-RIGHT COALITION WHICH WHOULD BE ENTIRELY DEPENDENT FOR ITS SURVIVAL ON THE CONTINUED SUPPORT OF ITS NSP AND NAP MEMBERS. (IT WAS THE NSP WHICH MADE SUCH DIFFICULTY FOR ECEVIT WHEN EARLIER IT WAS HIS COALITION PARTNER.)

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KORUTURK HAS BEEN BITTERLY, IF INDIRECTLY, CRITICIZED BY THE NATIONALIST FRONT FOR HIS REDESIGNATION ON MARCH 1 OF CARETAKER PRIMIN IRMAK TO FORM A "NATIONAL COALITION" RATHER THAN GIVING THE NOD AT THAT TIME TO DEMIREL AND HIS NATIONALIST FRONT EFFORT. IT IS PROBABLE THAT KOURUTURK'S DECISION TO DESIGNATE DEMIREL AFTER ECEVIT HAD DECLINED THE PREMIERSHIP REFLECTS A BELIEF THAT HE WAS OBLIGATED TO OFFER THE DUTY TO THE LEADERS OF THE LARGEST PARTIES IN TURN. HE MAY WELL HAVE CONSIDERED THAT, DESPITE HIS

ALLEGED RESERVATIONS REGARDING DEMIREL AND THE NATIONALIST FRONT,
HE COULD NOT BY-PASS THE FRONT WITH ITS 218 SEATS IN FAVOR OF A
GOVERNMENT STAFFED PRINCIPALLY BY THE 41-SEAT DP, EVEN
WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF SUPPORT BY THE RPP'S 186 SEATS.
HOWEVER, PRESENT EXPECTATIONS ARE THAT IF DEMIREL DOES NOT
SUCCEED, THE PRESIDENT WILL THEN TURN TO THE DP/RPP FORMULA.
BUT THE PRESIDENT, WHO KEEPS HIS OWN COUNSEL, IS NOT SAYING.

5. THE DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO REFER TO ANKARA 1616, WHICH
PROVIDED OUR COMMENTS ON THE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS OF A
NATIONALIST FRONT GOVERNMENT FOR US INTERESTS.
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